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ABSTRACT

This paper examines some of the key public policy implications of the media literacy movement using D. Easton's (1965) model of the policymaking process. The model has six elements: (1) demands and supports; (2) policymakers; (3) policy outputs; (4) policy outcomes; (5) feedback; and (6) environment. Each element is vital to understanding the policymaking process; however, the most relevant parts of the model for this discussion about media literacy policy issues are the environment and the demands and supports. Highlights of the discussion include a definition of media literacy, an analysis of television's impact on the climate of education, a history of early critical viewing skills programs, an overview of the current media literacy movement, and speculation about future policymaking and its impact. (Contains 1 figure, 4 notes, and 50 references.) (Author/NKA)

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Media Literacy and the Policymaking Process: A Framework for Understanding Influences on Potential Educational Policy Outputs

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Media Literacy and the Policymaking Process: A Framework for Understanding Influences on Potential Educational Policy Outputs

Abstract

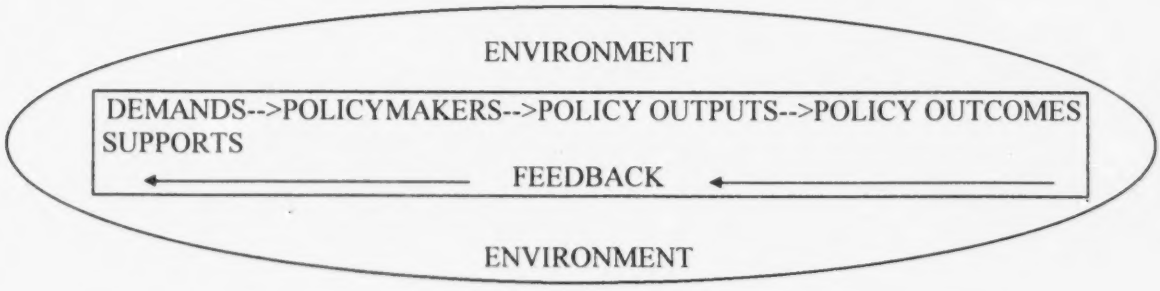
This paper examines some of the key public policy implications of the media literacy movement using Easton's (1965) model of the policymaking process. The model has six elements: 1) demands and supports, 2) policymakers, 3) policy outputs, 4) policy outcomes, 5) feedback, and 6) environment. Each element is vital to understanding the policymaking process; however, the most relevant parts of the model for this discussion about media literacy policy issues are the environment and the demands and supports. Highlights of the discussion include a definition of media literacy, an analysis of television's impact on the climate of education, a history of early critical viewing skills programs, an overview of the current media literacy movement, and speculation about future policymaking and its impact.

Media Literacy and the Policymaking Process: A Framework for Understanding Influences on Potential Educational Policy Outputs

Although many books and articles have been written about media literacy (Adams & Hamm, 1989; Austin & Johnson, 1995; Blair, 1995; Brown, 1991; Considine, 1990; Considine, 1994; Considine, 1995; Considine & Haley, 1992; Cortes, 1992; Crump, 1995; Duncan, 1989; Graham, 1989; Houk & Bogart, 1974; Lloyd-Kolkin & Tyner, 1988; McLaren, 1995; Melamed, 1989; Passe, 1994; Robinson, 1994; Silverblatt, 1995; Trampiets, 1995), few focus on the policy implications the movement has for the educational system. Therefore, this discussion is guided by the question, "What are the past and present public policy implications of the media literacy movement?" This paper will provide some insight into the policy issues surrounding media literacy. The goal of the proposed investigation is to compile a comprehensive review of the relevant literature linking media literacy and public policy. From the review, conclusions about future policy implications related to media literacy will be discussed.

The framework for the discussion is Easton's (1965) model of the policymaking process.

Figure 1: Model of the Policymaking Process



The model (see Figure 1) has six elements: 1) demands and supports, 2) policymakers, 3) policy outputs, 4) policy outcomes, 5) feedback, and 6) environment. Each element is vital to understanding the policymaking process; however, the most relevant parts of the model for this discussion about media literacy policy issues are the environment and the demands and supports. Highlights of the discussion will include a definition of media literacy, an analysis of television's impact on the climate of education, a history of early critical viewing skills programs, an overview of the current media literacy movement, and speculation about future policymaking and its impact.

MEDIA LITERACY

What we know about the world beyond our immediate surroundings comes to us via the media (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1989). Unfortunately, the media do not present their messages in a neutral and value-free way; they shape and distort reality (Considine, 1990; Melamed, 1989). This poses a problem for society. Individuals, especially students, are unable to distinguish between truthful and misleading messages sent by the media. It is through media literacy that they can be taught to be responsible consumers of the media.

Definition of Media Literacy

According to the Aspen Institute's[1] Report of the National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy,

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[1] "The Aspen Institute is an international nonprofit educational institution dedicated to enhancing the quality of leadership through informed dialogue. ... [Its] Communications and Society Program promotes integrated, values-based decision making in the fields of communications and information policy. It (Footnote continued on next page)

> a **media literate person** -- and everyone should have the opportunity to become one -- can decode, evaluate, analyze and produce both print and electronic media. The fundamental objective of media literacy is critical autonomy in relationship to all media. Emphases in media literacy training range widely, including informed citizenship, aesthetic appreciation and expression, social advocacy, self-esteem, and consumer competence (Aufderheide, 1993, p. 1).

This comprehensive definition illustrates the wide range of skills needed to be media literate. Besides teaching students how to analyze and critique media messages, media education provides the opportunity for them to learn to work together toward a common goal. In the process they learn about responsibility, cooperation, and problem solving. No matter what they do in life, they will always encounter situations that require these skills. In addition, students identify their strengths and weaknesses, develop varied interests, and accept new challenges.

HISTORY OF TELEVISION AND EDUCATION

Our nation has been concerned with education since its founding. "... James Madison made clear our priorities noting that, 'Knowledge will forever govern ignorance; and a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives'" (Center for Educational Priorities, 1995, p. 2). Therefore, an educated citizenry is necessary for political and economic survival; it is also an avenue for social mobility (Center for Educational Priorities, 1995). Education is, arguably, the foundation that supports all other societal institutions.

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accomplishes this by bringing together representatives of industry, government, the media, the academic world, nonprofits, and others to assess the impact of modern communications and information systems on democratic societies. The Program also promotes research and distributes conference reports to leaders in the communications and information fields and to the broader public" (Aspen Institute, 1996). [On-line]. Available: http://www.aspeninst.org/Index.html

This foundation stood solid for years. However, television rocked the foundation. Americans embraced television and began to spend hours in front of the television set (Comstock, 1989). As a result, reading and writing skills of young people suffered. Educators found themselves in a battle against television for the attention of young Americans (Center for Educational Priorities, 1995).

However, recent efforts have attempted to support educators in their battle against television's impact. The media literacy movement is helping teachers influence the minds of America's youth by teaching them how to analyze the impact of a media-dominated society. Although teachers may never shape students' minds like they once did, they can facilitate learning and influence students' cognitive processing of media images and messages by teaching them to be media literate.

CRITICAL VIEWING SKILLS PROGRAMS

Although the media literacy movement has received increased support in recent years, several of the central issues have been addressed over the last three decades. James A. Brown's book, Television "Critical Viewing Skills" Education: Major Media Literacy Projects in the United States and Selected Countries, is an excellent review of the beginning of the media literacy movement. Many of the central issues were first investigated in the United States by the federal government; however, funding for such projects dried up during the early 1980s. These early federal programs laid the foundation for future research by scholars and public interest groups about the potential benefits and necessity of media literacy programs.

Evolution of Critical Viewing Skills

Critical thinking is one of the fundamental elements of media literacy. It was the goal of early Greek philosophers and continues to be a priority in education. Critical analysis has been applied to all forms of communication. Early forms of print communication (e.g., books), mass media forms of print communication (e.g., newspapers, magazines), and visual communication (e.g., motion pictures) have been critically read or viewed over the years in an attempt to better understand what their messages are and how they are created (Brown, 1991).

Despite this history of critical reading and viewing, educational institutions were slow to recognize the value of formally teaching audiences how to critically evaluate mass media experiences. In the 1920s and 1930s, film appreciation courses began to spread throughout the United States and England, due in part to the growing number of contemporary movies (Brown, 1991). It was not until the 1960s that film studies were integrated fully into the curriculum of U.S. high schools and colleges, despite the presence of film courses since the 1930s (Worth, 1981). Finally, in the late 1970s, cinema courses began to incorporate film skills along with theory and criticism (Brown, 1991).

While educators were gradually recognizing the value of aiding audiences in their interpretation and analysis of the cinema, television was making its own impact. In the beginning, educators used television as an instrument for teaching. The U.S. and Great Britain developed and studied instructional use of television during the 1950s and 1960s. Also during that time, "some curricular designs for teaching better understanding and use of television were developed but not widely used" (Brown, 1991, p. 58).

An UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) meeting in Norway in 1962 laid the framework for "critical viewing skills" education. Due to the scope and power of television meeting participants suggested that educators accept the responsibility to teach young people how to use the medium constructively (Hodgikson, 1964). The aims of "critical viewing skills" education were stated as follows:

I. To help viewers to increase their understanding of what they see on the screen.
II. To encourage viewers to become more selective in their choice of program.
III. To help viewers to become more aware and discriminating in their responses and to develop their power of judgment so that they may benefit from those programs, both imaginative and factual, which have the capacity to enrich their lives.

> The aims of screen education thus consort with those of a truly democratic education, namely, to help the individual to respect and uphold truth and, on the basis of the richest possible personal development, to share and enjoy with his fellow men the treasures which our civilization offers to the human mind and heart (Hodgikson, 1964, p. 78).

Eleven years later the Ford Foundation echoed the perspective of UNESCO. The Foundation saw a need for increased and improved mass media instruction within public schools (Ford Foundation, 1975). The report of a Television and Children conference funded by the Ford, Markle, and National Science Foundations recommended several courses of study as part of a curriculum. Among the subjects were analysis of media appeals, interpretation of non-verbal cues, review of the broadcasting industry's history and structure, the economic aspect of television, analysis of program formats, analysis of values within television content, standards for criticism of content, and production skills (Ford Foundation, 1975).

USOE's Four Seed Projects

Critical viewing skills education received additional support in 1978 when the United States Office of Education (USOE) funded four "seed" projects for elementary and secondary teachers to teach students critical viewing skills (Brown, 1991). Each project was funded for two years. USOE narrowly defined critical viewing skills by relating them only to television. Such skills included understanding the psychological impact of commercials; recognizing fact and fiction; identifying and respecting different points of view; understanding the style and content of various types of programming; and understanding the relation between TV programming and the printed word (Lloyd-Kolkin, Wheeler, Strand, 1980). These seed projects were established in response to research that found a link between television violence and subsequent aggressive behavior in children (Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1963; Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee, 1972; Tyner, 1991).

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (Grades K-5)

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL), the first of the four seed projects, was established for teachers of grades K-5 as well as students' parents and youth leaders. The critical viewing skills (CVS) activities were designed for classroom and home use as well as within community organizations. Since it was difficult to add new components to existing school schedules, SEDL incorporated the program into existing courses (Brown, 1991).

WNET 13, New York City (Grades 6-8)

Since 1972, the Education Division of New York City's noncommercial television station WNET 13 had been conducting critical viewing skills workshops in New York area schools. With federal funding in 1978, WNET developed and tested formalized curriculum materials and conducted workshops for educators and community leaders across the nation. Ten training sessions were set up for school administrators and teacher trainers to help them conduct their own CVS workshops. Ten more sessions were arranged for community leaders and public librarians to help them train parents and children in critical home viewing. WNET's critical viewing skills program was designed for students in grades 6-8, but could be adapted for children at different cognitive levels. Creators of the program intended it to be part of the language arts or social studies curricula as well as to be used at home (Brown, 1991).

Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development

(Grades 9-12)

With a grant of $410,000, the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development (FWL) developed a CVS project directed to secondary students. This third USOE project had a fourfold mission. First, the project was to identify TV skills appropriate for teenagers; second, develop and field test course materials for teachers, students and families; third, create materials and provide workshops for educators, parents, and leaders of organizations; and fourth, publish and distribute those materials (Brown, 1991). After testing their initial curriculum, FWL determined their CVS program should address five areas of critical viewing abilities: 1) to assess and manage

one's own television viewing behavior; 2) to question the reality of television; 3) to identify persuasive techniques and messages and counter-argue them; 4) to recognize television effects on one's own life; and 5) to use television to facilitate family communications (Brown, 1991). FWL sought to develop these skills by helping students understand the economic basis of television, by teaching them about TV production techniques, and encouraging them to question TV messages and seek answers to their questions (Brown, 1991).

Boston University (Post-secondary and Adults)

In September 1978, the USOE devoted $400,000 to its fourth and final project, which was conducted by the School of Public Communication at Boston University. The project ended on July 31, 1981. The project was directed to college students, parents, and teachers with the intention of affecting the medium itself. The project's director, Donis Dondis (1980), argued that the effort to create critical viewers must begin with future gatekeepers, teachers, and television program producers in order for it to be successful. More specifically, critical viewing skills training "enables these audiences, in their present or future roles as parents, educators, business people, and community leaders, to comprehend and influence programming decisions" (Dondis, 1980, p. 3).

Funding Withdrawn

Despite the success of the four CVS projects, the government withdrew additional funding in the wake of a deep economic recession. The recession cultivated the widespread belief that students needed to know how to compete in the global

marketplace, which meant they needed to be computer literate. Since media education was associated with the recreational nature of television, critical viewing skills programs were deemed unnecessary frill and new funding for computer literacy programs replaced critical viewing as a top educational priority (Tyner, 1991).

THE CURRENT MOVEMENT

The media literacy movement in the United States has grown rapidly in the last five to six years (Considine, 1995). Numerous support and advocacy groups like the Center for Media Education, the Center for Media Literacy, the National Telemedia Council, Citizens for Media Literacy, and the Children's Media Policy Network have been created to educate the public about the need for media education. The National Communication Association has developed standards for media literacy in K-12 education (National Communication Association, 1996). Schools in Georgia, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Mexico, and North Carolina have some component of media literacy already within their curricula (Considine, 1995; Darlington, 1996). For example, Minneapolis students receive media literacy grades on their report cards and North Carolina students in grades K-12 are required to learn to "access, analyze, evaluate and create media" (Darlington, 1996, p. 9E). Media literacy is also reaching the community through the "Family and Community Critical Viewing Project"[2] sponsored by

[2] "The Family & Community Critical Viewing Project, a partnership of the National Parent Teacher Association, Cable in the Classroom, and the National Cable Television Association, provides free "Taking Charge of Your TV" workshops to help families view television carefully and critically. Since this nationwide initiative began in 1994, over 800 local cable operators, parents, and educators have been trained as presenters to give critical viewing workshops in their communities. ... This project has the support of national education organizations including the National Education Association, the American Association of School Administrators, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the
(Footnote continued on next page)

the National PTA (Parent Teacher Association), Cable in the Classroom, and the National Cable Television Association (Considine, 1995). With the passage of the Children's Television Act of 1990 and the subsequent debate over how to enforce the requirements of the Act, more attention has been given to the types and amount of media messages children are exposed to on a daily basis. With this renewed focus, media literacy should not fall by the wayside like previous critical viewing skills programs.

New Mexico Media Literacy Project

New Mexico is the leader in the media literacy movement. In 1993, the Downs Media Education Center (DMEC), with other supporters, funded the New Mexico Media Literacy Project (NMMLP) (Darlington, 1996). Hugh Downs of ABCs "20/20" and his daughter, Dierdre, founded the Downs Center. The Project is now sponsored by Albuquerque Academy Outreach and supported by the New Mexico State Department of Education and public and private sources. The goal of NMMLP is to make New Mexico the most media literate state in the nation and introduce the basic principles of media literacy to the state's population by the year 2000 (NMMLP, 1996). The Project has been recognized by local and national media as one of the "state and nation's most successful community-based educational matching grant programs" (NMMLP Newsletter, 1995, p. 1). Stories about the Project have run in the Los Angeles Times, on ABC News' "American Agenda," and NBC Nightly News (NMMLP Newsletter, 1995).

Feedback about the NMMLP's effort to create a media literate citizenry has been positive. The Project's director, Bob McCannon, is essentially a media literacy

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National Association of Elementary School Principals and the National School Boards Association" (Cable
(Footnote continued on next page)

salesperson, who travels the state giving workshops to public and private schools (ABC News, 1996). As part of McCannon's workshops and teacher training programs, "the concept of taking back our children's culture from the dominant media is resonating in New Mexico" (NMMLP Newsletter, 1995, p. 1). Those who hear the message realize that they, whether parents, teachers, churches, or media representatives, must reclaim from the media the task of teaching children lessons for life in their formative years and beyond (NMMLP Newsletter, 1995). Project members equate commercial television and other powerful media with strangers who come into the home and give thousands of hours worth of lessons on anti-intellectualism, gratuitous violence, addiction, and other anti-social values (NMMLP Newsletter, 1995). Media literacy exists to combat these "strangers."

The NMMLP reports that politicians, media personnel, parents, teachers, and others have applauded their efforts verbally and financially. One of the most important supporters of the program is the New Mexico State Department of Education. The State Department of Education has been recognized for its role in "carving out a special place for the teaching of media literacy through the Communication Skills requirement and the financial support of the project" (NMMLP Newsletter, 1995, p. 7). In 1996, the state provided $32,000 in support of NMMLP, which also is funded by a $105,000 grant from Albuquerque Academy.[3]

However, six New Mexico state legislators created a hurdle for the NMMLP. Although education and finance committees in both the State House and Senate agreed to

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in the Classroom, 1996). [On-line]. Available: http://www.ciconline.com/home.htm

[3] Albuquerque Academy is a non-denominational, coeducational, independent day school for 1,000 students in grades six through twelve. It houses the New Mexico Media Literacy Project.

continue providing $32,000 for the NMMLP, a conference committee, consisting of six legislators, cut funding for the NMMLP on the last day of the 1996 session. As a result of the budget cuts, Erika Hizel, NMMLP's coordinator, left her position in July 1996 (NMMLP Newsletter, 1996). According to Daniel Jaecks (personal communication, December 6, 1996), assistant to NMMLP Director Bob McCannon, the six legislators were uninformed about the purpose of the Project.

Additional funding from Albuquerque Academy, businesses, and other supporters ((NMMLP Newsletter, 1995) helped the NMMLP to overcome the small setback created by the state budget cuts. With the support of State Superintendent of Education Alan Morgan, School Board President Eleanor Ortiz, and members of Governor Gary Johnson's cabinet the NMMLP has been able to continue its efforts. State funding has been restored and the Project is still on course to achieve its goal of creating the most media literate state in the nation.

National Media Literacy Efforts

On a national level, media literacy finds support from top government officials. U. S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley has said, "'young people need to stretch their minds and avoid being passive consumers ... Television is here to stay, and our young people need to become savvy and thinking people when it comes to understanding the media'" (Rubel, 1996). In her book, It Takes A Village, Hillary Clinton alludes to media literacy. She believes television affects what and how we think and argues for teaching children to watch television critically (Rubel, 1996).

The concern about how we think is at the heart of media literacy training. The objective of such training is to produce critical thinkers who can evaluate and analyze media messages. But, for teachers to train students to be critical consumers of the media, they must have specific objectives for their students and be trained themselves.

National Communication Association Standards for Media Literacy

The National Communication Association has recommended standards for teaching and learning about media literacy. The K-12 Standards for Speaking, Listening, and Media Literacy (National Communication Association, 1996) are the result of the call for a system of voluntary standards in the "core" subjects of English, math, history, geography and science by the National Education Goals Panel (1992) as well as the national education reform legislation, "Goals 2000: Educate America Act." This act proposed the development of standards in several subjects, including communication (U.S. Department of Labor, 1991).

NCA made several assumptions about these standards. Acceptance is voluntary; the standards are not a national curriculum; they serve as a framework for each state, school districts, or local schools to use to develop curricula; and the standards are not all-inclusive; rather, they provide the opportunity for necessary additions by each state, school districts, schools, and individual teachers (National Communication Association, 1996). These assumptions are important because they leave the decision about adopting and implementing the standards up to the individual states and their respective school districts. Such freedom and flexibility may be the catalyst to get other states and school districts to adopt the standards and help students become media literate.

NCA also provided guidelines for implementing these standards. It is clear that only those trained in the designated areas should be allowed to teach the specific skills and concepts associated with media literacy. This has been a problem for the media literacy movement from the start. Teachers who participated in the four "seed" projects in the late 1970s complained they did not know how to use the materials given to them. Today, with projects like NMMLP and workshops conducted by organizations like the National PTA and Cable in the Classroom, there should be more teachers (of all subjects) qualified to teach media literacy skills. Training teachers of all subjects is in accord with NCA recommendations that the concepts and skills of media literacy be taught across the entire curriculum. NCA also recommends that teachers receive ongoing in-service training to help them create and adapt assignments to help foster students' communication competence (National Communication Association, 1996).

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

So far the discussion has provided a brief look at a model media literacy project and examined some of the broader issues surrounding the notion of a media literate citizenry. However, it is important to look specifically at the policy implications of the media literacy movement.

Although scholars and educators have made a strong case for the inclusion of media literacy in existing school curricula (Considine, 1990; Duncan, 1989, Sneed, Wulfemeyer, Van Ommeren, & Riffe, 1989), several obstacles have prohibited universal adoption of media literacy programs. For many teachers, the idea is noble, but they are unsure how to carry it out. They, themselves, need training before they can be expected

to teach media literacy skills. For some administrators, school boards, and governmental officials the idea of teaching kids how to watch television is not worth taxpayers' money. In addition, more evidence is needed to determine which part of the curriculum is best suited for a media literacy component. These obstacles are at the heart of the policy issues surrounding media literacy programs in the United States.

Points of Dispute

One of the points of dispute revolves around what the mass media are doing to the nation's children as well as society as a whole (Davis, 1993). Public interest groups, parents, educators, and others believe the media, especially television, is creating a passive society. This passive behavior has allowed the media to perpetuate stereotypes, violence, immoral activity, and consumer deception. These groups believe media literacy is the way to combat what the media are doing to society (Davis, 1993).

Of course, some media representatives do not see the need for media literacy. Jeff DeJoseph, executive vice president/director of account planning and strategic services for J. Walter Thompson, a New York-based advertising agency, believes children growing up in today's society already have an understanding of how the media work. DeJoseph claims media literacy classes are like the Parents' Music Resource Coalition of the 1980s. "Every few years, we need a fashion to analyze things to protect our young," said DeJoseph (Rubel, 1996, p. 2). New York Times television critic, Walter Goodman, echoes DeJoseph's belief in the public television documentary "Media Literacy: The New Basic," the latest in the 13-part series produced by the On Television Project at

Rutgers University.[4] Goodman believes there will be no national policy for media literacy. He argues that students do not need to learn how to watch television and suggests that television programming is lacking in educational value (On Television Project, 1996).

Despite these sentiments, other media representatives are backing the movement. As noted earlier, Hugh Downs and daughter, Dierdre, who is a producer for ABC's "20/20," are catalysts in the media education arena. Dierdre Downs notes that consumers and politicians embraced the idea of media literacy far more readily than the media itself. However, she was able to convince the media that the NMMLP was not an attack on the industry, but an education movement.

Other issues affecting policymaking include local, state, and federal control, funding, and where media literacy fits in the current curricula. According to Elizabeth Thoman, executive director of the Center for Media Literacy (personal communication, November, 26 1996), no federal money is available for media literacy at this time. In the past, the federal government has provided funding for critical viewing skills programs, but its contribution ceased in the early 1980s. Thoman explained that entrepreneurial teachers in fairly progressive schools and programs fund media literacy. Since federal funds are absent, the issue of federal control over these programs is minimal. However, if the U.S. Department of Education made funds available to promote media education, control issues between federal, state, and local governments would surely arise. The power of the purse strings potentially could give the federal government unlimited

[4] The On Television media education project is a 13-part documentary series that explores the impact of television across virtually every aspect of American life. The first three parts were "On Television: The (Footnote continued on next page)

control. Local and state educators would be at the mercy of Congressional leaders to create a national policy that would provide flexibility in the implementation of media literacy requirements.

Another issue central to the media literacy policy debate concerns which grade levels would benefit most from media literacy instruction and in what part of the curriculum it should be taught. Austin and Johnson (1995) found that elementary school children benefit from media literacy instruction. Davies (1993) suggested that the middle school grades are best suited for media education. Sneed et al. (1989) called for media studies across the high school social science curriculum, and Considine (1990; 1995) argued that media literacy should be across the entire curriculum. All of the arguments are valid. Media literacy is useful in a social science curriculum (Wulfemeyer, Sneed, Van Ommeren, & Riffe, 1990); it is effective in middle schools (Davies, 1993); and it can be a part of the entire curriculum (Considine & Haley, 1992). The model programs throughout the country suggest that media literacy works across the entire curriculum. The National Communication Association guidelines are for K-12 education, which indicates that communication educators see the benefit of media literacy in all grades. Therefore, the debate is no longer where media literacy belongs in the curriculum; rather, the debate should center on how to successfully implement media education.

The Process of Creating Demands and Supports

In the documentary, "Media Literacy: The New Basic" (On Television Project, 1996), Hugh Downs and Walter Cronkite believe there will be a national policy on media

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Violence Factor" (1984), "On Television: Public Trust or Private Property" (1988), and "On Television:
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literacy in the near future. However, as noted by a gentlemen featured in the documentary, a national policy will nōt be passed until citizens become more aware of how media illiterate they really are. Current supporters of the media literacy movement are creating such awareness. The process of making citizens aware of media manipulations and effects generates the demands and supports used to influence policymakers.

Several components used in the process of generating demands and supports have been mentioned already. They include public interest organizations like the Center for Media Literacy and the Media Education Foundation, pilot programs like the NMMLP, community-centered efforts like the National PTA's "Family and Community Critical Viewing Project," and leadership efforts like the National Communication Association's standards for media literacy. Connected to these awareness efforts are practical resources that contribute to the creation of demands and supports. These resources include instructional materials, workshops, training sessions, video productions, and academic research.

Proponents of media literacy use these resources to generate evidence that shows media education is valuable. Supporters can cite the latest scholarly research to indicate that media literacy influences students' critical thinking skills or produce a video that captures inspired students working together to create a television program. Through such reports and programs policymakers can see the impact of media literacy.

Policymakers also are influenced by evidence that is contrary to that provided by media education advocates. Proponents of media literacy must refute the opposition's

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Teach the Children" (1992).

claims in order to put ample pressure on the policymakers to pass a policy supporting media education. As the environment changes, the demands and supports placed on policymakers change. Therefore, it is imperative that media literacy supporters keep abreast of the changing environment and effectively use their resources to generate the necessary demands and supports that will keep media literacy on the policymakers' agenda.

Opposition to Media Literacy

Although various groups and individuals support media literacy, it is not without opposition. The opposition cannot be characterized as an organized movement against media education; rather, the opposition is a collection of barriers that have the potential to hinder the success of the media literacy movement.

Teacher training is the most significant obstacle hindering the widespread implementation of media literacy within school curricula. This issue was present in the United States Office of Education's four Critical Viewing Skills projects of the late 1970s. The programs suffered from a lack of teacher training despite a substantial budget (Tyner, 1991). To overcome this obstacle, more pre-service training is needed for new teachers entering the field, and more time is needed to train current teachers how to address media in the classroom (Considine, 1990; 1995; Duncan, 1989; Tyner, 1991).

Even if ample teacher training were available, not all teachers see the benefit of media literacy training. For example, a math teacher may not see a relationship between television viewing and math skills. However, media literacy training would reveal that a connection could be made. A math teacher could teach students basic math skills by

asking them to count the number of violent acts in a cartoon and determine the average per half-hour, per hour, per show, etc. Inherent in this lesson would be the opportunity to discuss the societal impact of violence on television. Obviously, teachers would need to tailor the discussion to their grade level, but such a lesson would prove beneficial in terms of math and media literacy.

Another barrier to the widespread implementation of media literacy rests with the history of educational reform. History shows that the educational environment creates demands and supports that are used to pressure policymakers to adopt policies favoring the "cause of the moment." There have been so many "causes of the moment" in the educational environment over the years that the educational system's history is marred by disjointed funding and confused teaching practices. For example, in the late 1980s computer literacy was in limbo because of insufficient teacher training, an emphasis on the basics of drill and practice and decreased funding for equipment (Martinez & Mead, 1988). It would serve the educational community well to review its history and identify how the changing environment has influenced policy demands. Anderson's (1980) theoretical lineage of critical viewing curricula indicated that educational trends in the U.S. demonstrate that teachers will actively or passively reject a curriculum thrust upon them by classroom outsiders. This is key for media education supporters. The demands generated within the environment must come from classroom educators for media literacy programs to survive. If teachers believe they are forced to teach media literacy, then it too will suffer the same fate as other educational causes.

Tyner (1991) identified other barriers:

> the perception that the study of fine arts is superior to popular culture; the supremacy of print over other communication forms in public schools; and the entrenched feudalism of discrete areas of study. There is also a pervasive Yankee disinclination to look critically at U.S. culture, a first step in media education. Although U.S. media educators could learn much from our international colleagues, Americans have typically exhibited a xenophobia about incorporating educational ideas from outside the country (p. 5).

CONCLUSIONS

Unless these barriers are addressed, little progress will be made. Media educators must frame the debate about societal literacy to encompass all forms of communication and "leave room for flexibility in policymaking so that teachers can learn to accommodate rapidly changing communication forms and literacy needs" (Tyner, 1991, p. 6). A possible approach to solving this problem involves stressing the goals of democratic citizenship as central to U.S. education and forming "coalitions between technologists, protectionists, artists and media professionals" (Tyner, 1991, p. 6).

The Downs Media Education Center has paved the way for media professionals to work with media literacy proponents in promoting media education by depicting media literacy as an educational movement not a media-bashing crusade. Media producers can help facilitate the movement in several ways. Financial backing is among the most important, but there are others. Programs that deal with how media messages are created and disseminated would be useful for teachers and parents. Producers, directors, actors, and other media personnel could volunteer to talk with students about certain aspects of the media. Such discussions might help broadcasters fulfill some of the new regulations for the Children's Television Act of 1990. Another reason for media representatives to support the media literacy movement is the potential for increased viewership. Some

might argue this point, but if educators are encouraging students to watch programs, then the industry is reaping benefits. Of course, the counter-argument is that media literate consumers might choose not to watch because they have been taught how deceptive the media can be. Granted, this could happen, but if a partnership is developed among educators, public interest groups, and the media then cooperation might develop among the parties so that all are winners.

Cooperation is also needed from state education departments. Supporters of the NMMLP need to keep their legislature informed of the Project's purpose and goals so that they will avoid another unexpected budget cut like the one in 1996. Other states that are embracing the media literacy movement, like North Carolina and Minnesota, need to continue their efforts so that funds from their state legislatures and school boards will not disappear.

In addition to state funding, the success of a statewide push for media literacy in New Mexico and North Carolina may be due to the fact that each school is not required to follow a rigid media literacy curriculum. Individual districts, schools, and teachers have the freedom to incorporate media education to best suit their needs. Such flexibility is key to making media literacy work. The National Communication Association recognized this when it developed its guidelines for media literacy in K-12 education. Policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels must keep this in mind as they develop legislation for media literacy.

Too much work has gone into the media literacy movement for it to lose support like it did in the early 1980s. With more schools adopting some form of media literacy within their curricula and with extensive training programs available throughout the

country, media literacy is here to stay. What needs to happen in the future is more institutions of higher education need to follow the lead of Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina, and include media literacy as part of the training a future educator receives (Considine, 1995).

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